

Human history

Human history or **world history** is the record of [humankind](#) from [prehistory](#) to the [present](#). [Modern humans](#) evolved in [Africa](#) around 300,000 years ago and initially lived as [hunter-gatherers](#). They [migrated out of Africa](#) during the [Last Ice Age](#) and had spread across Earth's continental land except [Antarctica](#) by the end of the Ice Age 12,000 years ago. Soon afterward, the [Neolithic Revolution](#) in [West Asia](#) brought the first systematic [husbandry](#) of plants and animals, and saw many humans transition from a [nomadic](#) life to a [sedentary](#) existence as farmers in [permanent settlements](#). The growing complexity of human societies necessitated systems of [accounting](#) and [writing](#).

These developments paved the way for the [emergence of early civilizations](#) in [Mesopotamia](#), [Egypt](#), the [Indus Valley](#), and [China](#), marking the beginning of the [ancient period](#) in 3500 BCE. These civilizations supported the establishment of regional empires and acted as a fertile ground for the advent of transformative philosophical and religious ideas, initially [Hinduism](#) during the late [Bronze Age](#), and – during the [Axial Age](#): [Buddhism](#), [Confucianism](#), [Greek philosophy](#), [Jainism](#), [Judaism](#), [Taoism](#), and [Zoroastrianism](#). The subsequent [post-classical period](#), from about 500 to 1500 CE, witnessed the rise of [Islam](#) and the continued spread and consolidation of [Christianity](#) while civilization expanded to new parts of the world and trade between societies increased. These developments were accompanied by the rise and decline of major empires, such as the [Byzantine Empire](#), the Islamic [caliphates](#), the [Mongol Empire](#), and various [Chinese dynasties](#). This period's invention of [gunpowder](#) and of the [printing press](#) greatly affected subsequent history.

During the [early modern period](#), spanning from approximately 1500 to 1800 CE, [European powers](#) [explored](#) and [colonized](#) regions worldwide, intensifying cultural and economic exchange. This era saw substantial intellectual, cultural, and technological advances in Europe driven by the [Renaissance](#), the [Reformation](#) in [Germany](#) giving rise to [Protestantism](#), the [Scientific Revolution](#), and the [Enlightenment](#). By the 18th century, the accumulation of knowledge and technology had reached a [critical mass](#) that brought about the [Industrial Revolution](#), substantial to the [Great Divergence](#), and began the [modern period](#) starting around 1800 CE. The rapid growth in productive power further increased [international trade](#) and [colonization](#), linking the different civilizations in the process of [globalization](#), and cemented European dominance throughout the 19th century. Over the last quarter-millennium, which included two devastating [world wars](#), there has been a great acceleration in many spheres, including [human population](#), agriculture, industry, commerce, scientific knowledge, technology, communications, military capabilities, and [environmental degradation](#).

The study of human history relies on insights from academic disciplines including [history](#), [archaeology](#), [anthropology](#), [linguistics](#), and [genetics](#). To provide an accessible overview, researchers divide human history by a variety of periodizations.

Prehistory

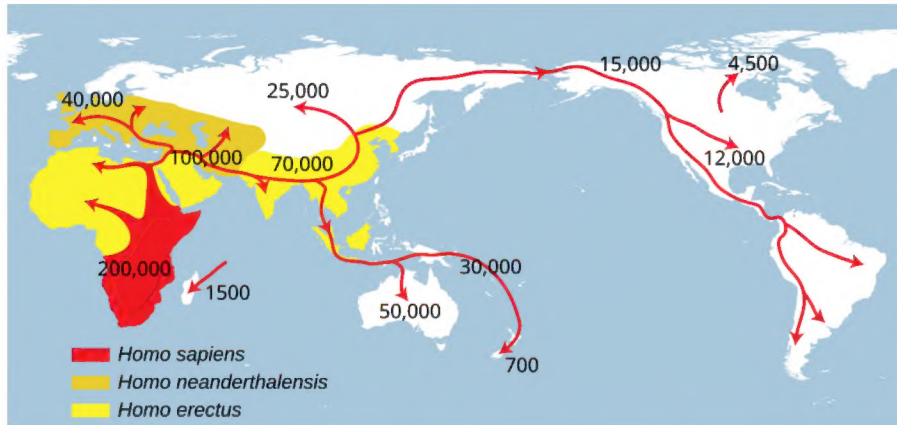
Human origins

Humans evolved in Africa from [great apes](#) through the lineage of [hominins](#), which arose 7–5 million years ago.^[1] The [ability to walk on two legs](#) emerged in early hominins after the split from [chimpanzees](#), as an adaptation possibly associated with a shift from forest to savanna habitats.^[2] Hominins began to use rudimentary stone tools c. 3.3 million years ago,^[a] marking the advent of the [Paleolithic](#) era.^[6]

The genus [Homo](#) evolved from [Australopithecus](#).^[7] The earliest record of *Homo* is the 2.8 million-year-old specimen [LD 350-1](#) from Ethiopia,^[8] and the earliest named species is [Homo habilis](#) which evolved by 2.3 million years ago.^[9] The most important difference between *Homo habilis* and *Australopithecus* was a 50% increase in brain size.^[10] [H. erectus](#)^[b] evolved about 2 million years ago^{[11][c]} and was the first hominin species to [leave Africa](#) and disperse across Eurasia.^[13] Perhaps as early as 1.5 million years ago, but certainly by 250,000 years ago, hominins [began to use fire](#) for heat and cooking.^[14]

Beginning about 500,000 years ago, *Homo* diversified into many new species of [archaic humans](#) such as the [Neanderthals](#) in Europe, the [Denisovans](#) in [Siberia](#), and the diminutive *H. floresiensis* in [Indonesia](#).^[15] Human evolution was not a simple linear or branched progression but involved [interbreeding between related species](#).^[16] Genomic research has shown that hybridization between substantially diverged lineages was common in human evolution.^[17] [DNA](#) evidence suggests that several genes of Neanderthal origin are present among all non-[sub-Saharan African](#) populations. Neanderthals and other hominins, such as Denisovans, may have contributed up to 6% of their [genome](#) to present-day non-sub-Saharan African humans.^[18]

Early humans



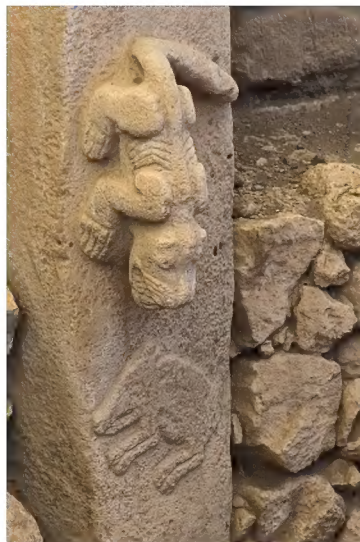
Successive dispersals of *Homo erectus* (yellow), *Homo neanderthalensis* (ochre) during *Out of Africa I* and *Homo sapiens* (red, *Out of Africa II*), with the numbers of years since they appeared *before present*.

Homo sapiens emerged in Africa around 300,000 years ago^[d] from the species *Homo heidelbergensis*.^{[e][20]} Humans continued to develop over the succeeding millennia, and by 100,000 years ago, were using jewelry and [ocher](#) to adorn the body.^[21] By 50,000 years ago, they buried their dead, used projectile weapons, and engaged in seafaring.^[22] One of the most important changes (the date of which is unknown) was the [development of syntactic language](#), which dramatically improved the human ability to communicate.^[23] Signs of early artistic expression can be found in the form of [cave paintings](#) and sculptures made from ivory, stone, and bone, implying a form of spirituality generally interpreted as [animism](#)^[24] or [shamanism](#).^[25] The earliest known musical instruments besides the human voice are [bone flutes](#) from the [Swabian Jura](#) in Germany, dated around 40,000 years old.^[26] Paleolithic humans lived as [hunter-gatherers](#) and were generally [nomadic](#).^[27]

The migration of anatomically modern humans [out of Africa](#) took place in multiple waves beginning 194,000–177,000 years ago.^{[28][f]} The [dominant view among scholars](#) is that the early waves of migration died out and all modern non-Africans are descended from a single group that left Africa 70,000–50,000 years ago.^{[32][g]} *H. sapiens* proceeded to colonize all the continents and larger islands, arriving in [Australia](#) 65,000 years ago,^[34] [Europe](#) 45,000 years ago,^[35] and the [Americas](#) 21,000 years ago.^[36] These migrations occurred during the [most recent Ice Age](#), when various temperate regions of today were inhospitable.^[37] Nevertheless, by the end of the Ice Age some 12,000 years ago, humans had colonized nearly all ice-free parts of the globe.^[38] Human expansion coincided with both the [Quaternary extinction event](#) and the [Neanderthal extinction](#).^[39] These extinctions were probably caused by climate change, human activity, or a combination of the two.^[40]

Rise of agriculture

Beginning around 10,000 BCE, the [Neolithic Revolution](#) marked the development of [agriculture](#), which fundamentally changed the human lifestyle.^[41] Agriculture began independently in different parts of the globe,^[42] and included a diverse range of [taxa](#), in at least 11 separate [centers of origin](#).^[43] [Cereal crop](#) cultivation and [animal domestication](#) had occurred in [Mesopotamia](#) by at least 8500 BCE in the form of wheat, [barley](#), sheep, and goats.^[44] The [Yangtze River Valley](#) in China domesticated rice around 8000–7000 BCE; the [Yellow River Valley](#) may have cultivated [millet](#) by 7000 BCE.^[45] Pigs were the most important domesticated animal in early China.^[46] People in Africa's [Sahara](#) cultivated [sorghum](#) and several other crops between 8000 and 5000 BCE,^[h] while other agricultural centers arose in the [Ethiopian Highlands](#) and the West African rainforests.^[48] In the [Indus River Valley](#), crops were cultivated by 7000 BCE and cattle were domesticated by 6500 BCE.^[49] In the Americas, [squash](#) was cultivated by at least 8500 BCE in South America, and domesticated [arrowroot](#) appeared in Central America by 7800 BCE.^[50] Potatoes were first cultivated in the [Andes](#) of South America, where the [llama](#) was also domesticated.^[51] It is likely that women played a central role in plant domestication throughout these developments.^[52]



A pillar at Neolithic [Göbekli Tepe](#)

Various explanations of the causes of the Neolithic Revolution have been proposed.^[53] Some theories identify population growth as the main factor, leading people to seek out new food sources. Others see population growth not as the cause but as the effect of the associated improvements in food supply.^[54] Further suggested factors include climate change, resource scarcity, and ideology.^[55] The transition to agriculture created food surpluses that could support people not directly engaged in food production,^[56] permitting far denser populations and the creation of the first cities and [states](#).^[57]

Cities were centers of [trade](#), [manufacturing](#), and [political power](#).^[58] They developed mutually beneficial relationships with their surrounding [countrysides](#), receiving agricultural products and

providing manufactured goods and varying degrees of political control in return.^[59] **Pastoral societies** based on nomadic animal herding also developed, mostly in dry areas unsuited for plant cultivation such as the **Eurasian Steppe** or the African **Sahel**.^[60] Conflict between nomadic herders and **sedentary** agriculturalists was frequent and became a recurring theme in world history.^[61]

Metalworking was first used in the creation of copper tools and ornaments around 6400 BCE.^[48] Gold and silver soon followed, primarily for use in ornaments.^[48] The first signs of **bronze**, an alloy of copper and **tin**, date to around 4500 BCE,^[62] but the alloy did not become widely used until the 3rd millennium BCE.^[63]

Ancient history

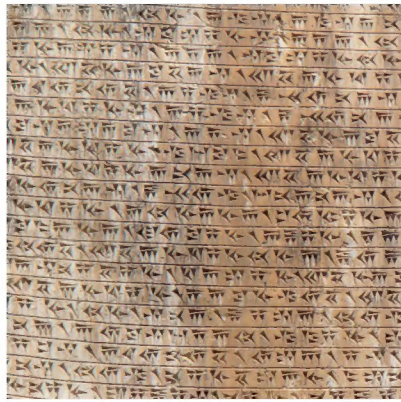
Cradles of civilization



Great Pyramids of Giza, Egypt

The Bronze Age saw the development of cities and **civilizations**.^[64] Early civilizations arose close to rivers, first in Mesopotamia (3300 BCE) with the **Tigris and Euphrates**,^[65] followed by the **Egyptian civilization** along the **Nile River** (3200 BCE),^[66] the **Norte Chico civilization** in coastal **Peru** (3100 BCE),^[67] the **Indus Valley civilization** in Pakistan and northwestern India (2500 BCE),^[68] and the **Chinese civilization** along the **Yangtze** and **Yellow Rivers** (2200 BCE).^{[69][i]}

These societies developed a number of shared characteristics, including a central government, a complex economy and social structure, and systems for keeping records.^[72] These cultures variously invented the wheel,^[73] mathematics,^[74] bronze-working,^[75] sailing boats,^[76] the **potter's wheel**,^[75] **woven** cloth,^[77] construction of monumental buildings,^[77] and writing.^[78] **Polytheistic** religions developed, centered on temples where **priests** and priestesses performed **sacrificial** rites.^[79]



Cuneiform inscription, eastern
Turkey

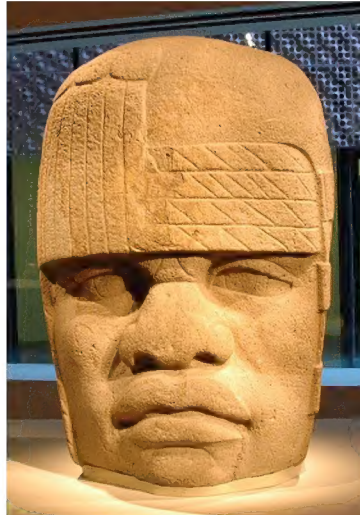
Writing facilitated the administration of cities, the expression of ideas, and the preservation of information.^[80] It may have independently developed in at least four ancient civilizations: Mesopotamia (3300 BCE),^[81] Egypt (around 3250 BCE),^[82] China (1200 BCE),^[83] and lowland Mesoamerica (by 650 BCE).^[84] The earliest system of writing^[j] was the Mesopotamian cuneiform script, which began as a system of pictographs, whose pictorial representations eventually became simplified and more abstract.^{[86][k]} Other influential early writing systems include Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Indus script.^[88] In China, writing was first used during the Shang dynasty (1766–1045 BCE).^[89]

Transport was facilitated by waterways, including rivers and seas, which fostered the projection of military power and the exchange of goods, ideas, and inventions.^[90] The Bronze Age also saw new land technologies, such as horse-based cavalry and chariots, that allowed armies to move faster.^[91] Trade became increasingly important as urban societies exchanged manufactured goods for raw materials from distant lands, creating vast commercial networks and the beginnings of archaic globalization.^[92] Bronze production in Southwest Asia, for example, required the import of tin from as far away as England.^[93]

The growth of cities was often followed by the establishment of states and empires.^[94] In Egypt, the initial division into Upper and Lower Egypt was followed by the unification of the whole valley around 3100 BCE.^[95] Around 2600 BCE, the Indus Valley civilization built major cities at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.^[96] Mesopotamian history was characterized by frequent wars between city-states, leading to shifts in hegemony from one city to another.^[97] In the 25th–21st centuries BCE, the empires of Akkad and the Neo-Sumerians arose in this area.^[98] In Crete, the Minoan civilization emerged by 2000 BCE and is regarded as the first civilization in Europe.^[99]

Over the following millennia, civilizations developed across the world.^[100] By 1600 BCE, Mycenaean Greece began to develop.^[101] It flourished until the Late Bronze Age collapse that affected many Mediterranean civilizations between 1300 and 1000 BCE.^[102] The foundations of many cultural aspects in India were laid in the Vedic period (1750–600 BCE), including the

emergence of [Hinduism](#).^{[103][1]} From around 550 BCE, many independent kingdoms and republics known as the [Mahajanapadas](#) were established across the subcontinent.^[105]



[Olmec colossal head](#), now at the Museo de Antropología de Xalapa

Speakers of the [Bantu languages](#) began [expanding](#) across Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa as early as 3000 BCE until 1000 CE.^[106] Their expansion and encounters with other groups resulted in the displacement of the [Pygmy peoples](#) and the [Khoisan](#), and in the spread of [mixed farming](#) and [ironworking](#) throughout sub-Saharan Africa, laying the foundations for later states.^[107]

The [Lapita culture](#) emerged in the [Bismarck Archipelago](#) near [New Guinea](#) around 1500 BCE and colonized many uninhabited islands of [Remote Oceania](#), reaching as far as [Samoa](#) by 700 BCE.^[108]

In the Americas, the Norte Chico culture emerged in Peru around 3100 BCE.^[67] The Norte Chico built public monumental architecture at the city of [Caral](#), dated 2627–1977 BCE.^[109] The later [Chavín](#) polity is sometimes described as the first [Andean](#) state,^[110] centered on the religious site at [Chavín de Huantar](#).^[111] Other important Andean cultures include the [Moche](#), whose ceramics depict many aspects of daily life, and the [Nazca](#), who created animal-shaped designs in the desert called [Nazca lines](#).^[112] The [Olmecs](#) of Mesoamerica developed by about 1200 BCE^[113] and are known for the [colossal stone heads](#) that they carved from [basalt](#).^[114] They also devised the [Mesoamerican calendar](#) that was used by later cultures such as the [Maya](#) and [Teotihuacan](#).^[115] Societies in North America were primarily egalitarian hunter-gatherers, supplementing their diet with the plants of the [Eastern Agricultural Complex](#).^[116] They built earthworks such as [Watson Brake](#) (4000 BCE) and [Poverty Point](#) (3600 BCE), both in Louisiana.^[117]

Axial Age



Standing Buddha from
Gandhara, 2nd century CE

From 800 to 200 BCE,^[118] the Axial Age saw the emergence of transformative philosophical and religious ideas that developed in many different places mostly independently of each other.^[119] Chinese [Confucianism](#),^[120] Indian [Buddhism](#) and [Jainism](#),^[121] and Jewish [monotheism](#) all arose during this period.^[122] Persian [Zoroastrianism](#) began earlier, perhaps around 1000 BCE, but was institutionalized by the [Achaemenid Empire](#) during the Axial Age.^[123] New philosophies took hold in Greece during the 5th century BCE, epitomized by thinkers such as [Plato](#) and [Aristotle](#).^[124] The first [Olympic Games](#) were held in 776 BCE, marking a period known as "[classical antiquity](#)".^[125] In 508 BCE, [the world's first democratic system](#) of government was instituted in [Athens](#).^[126]

Axial Age ideas shaped subsequent intellectual and religious history. Confucianism was one of the three schools of thought that came to dominate Chinese thinking, along with [Taoism](#) and [Legalism](#).^[127] The Confucian tradition, which would become particularly influential, looked for [political morality](#) not to the force of law but to the power and example of tradition.^[128] Confucianism would later spread to [Korea](#) and Japan.^[129] Buddhism reached China in about the 1st century CE^[130] and spread widely, with 30,000 Buddhist temples in northern China alone by the 7th century CE.^[131] Buddhism became the main religion in much of South, Southeast, and East Asia.^[132] The Greek philosophical tradition^[133] diffused throughout the Mediterranean world and as far as India, starting in the 4th century BCE after the conquests of [Alexander the Great](#) of [Macedon](#).^[134] Both [Christianity](#) and [Islam](#) developed from the beliefs of [Judaism](#).^[135]

Regional empires

The millennium from 500 BCE to 500 CE saw a series of empires of unprecedented size develop. Well-trained professional armies, unifying ideologies, and advanced bureaucracies created the

possibility for emperors to rule over large domains whose populations could attain numbers upwards of tens of millions of subjects.^[136] [International trade](#) also expanded, most notably the massive trade routes in the Mediterranean Sea, the [maritime trade web in the Indian Ocean](#), and the [Silk Road](#).^[137]



Carving of Persian and Median soldiers,
[Persepolis, Achaemenid Empire](#), 5th
century BCE

The kingdom of the [Medes](#) helped to destroy the [Assyrian Empire](#) in tandem with the nomadic [Scythians](#) and the [Babylonians](#).^[138] [Nineveh](#), the capital of Assyria, was sacked by the Medes in 612 BCE.^[139] The [Median Empire](#) gave way to successive [Iranian](#) states, including the [Achaemenid](#) (550–330 BCE),^[140] [Parthian](#) (247 BCE – 224 CE),^[141] and [Sasanian Empires](#) (224–651 CE).^[142]

Two major empires began in modern-day [Greece](#). In the late 5th century BCE, several Greek [city states](#) checked the Achaemenid Persian advance in Europe through the [Greco-Persian Wars](#). These wars were followed by the [Golden Age of Athens](#), the seminal period of ancient Greece that laid many of the foundations of [Western civilization](#), including the [first theatrical performances](#).^[143] The wars led to the creation of the [Delian League](#), founded in 477 BCE,^[144] and eventually the [Athenian Empire](#) (454–404 BCE), which was defeated by a Spartan-led coalition during the [Peloponnesian War](#).^[145] [Philip of Macedon](#) unified the Greek city-states into the [Hellenic League](#) and his son Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) founded an empire extending from present-day Greece to India.^[146] The empire divided into several [successor states](#) shortly after his death, resulting in the founding of many cities and the spread of Greek culture throughout conquered regions, a process referred to as [Hellenization](#).^[147] The [Hellenistic period](#) lasted from the death of Alexander in 323 BCE until 31 BCE, when [Ptolemaic Egypt](#) fell to Rome.^[148]

In Europe, the [Roman Republic](#) was founded in the 6th century BCE^[149] and began expanding its territory in the 3rd century BCE.^[150] Prior to this, the [Carthaginian Empire](#) had dominated the Mediterranean, however lost [three successive wars](#) to the Romans. The Republic became an [empire](#) and by the time of [Augustus](#) (63 BCE – 14 CE), it had established dominion over most of the Mediterranean Sea.^[151] The empire continued to grow and reached its peak under [Trajan](#) (53–117 CE), controlling much of the land from England to Mesopotamia.^[152] The two centuries

that followed are known as the *Pax Romana*, a period of unprecedented peace, prosperity, and political stability in most of Europe.^[153] Christianity was legalized by Constantine I in 313 CE after three centuries of imperial persecution. It became the sole official religion of the empire in 380 CE while the emperor Theodosius outlawed pagan religions in 391–392 CE.^[154]

In South Asia, Chandragupta Maurya founded the Maurya Empire (320–185 BCE), which flourished under Ashoka the Great.^[155] From the 4th to 6th centuries CE, the Gupta Empire oversaw the period referred to as ancient India's golden age.^[156] The resulting stability helped usher in a flourishing period for Hindu and Buddhist culture in the 4th and 5th centuries, as well as major advances in science and mathematics.^[157] In South India, three prominent Dravidian kingdoms emerged: the Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas.^[158]



Pillar erected by Ashoka, a Mauryan Emperor in India

In China, Qin Shi Huang put an end to the chaotic Warring States period by uniting all of China under the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE).^[159] Qin Shi Huang was an adherent of the Legalist school of thought and he displaced the hereditary aristocracy by creating an efficient system of administration staffed by officials appointed according to merit.^[160] The harshness of the Qin dynasty led to rebellions and the dynasty's fall.^[161] It was followed by the Han dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE), which combined the Legalist bureaucratic system with Confucian ideals.^[162] The Han dynasty was comparable in power and influence to the Roman Empire that lay at the other end of the Silk Road.^[163] As economic prosperity fueled their military expansion, the Han conquered parts of Mongolia, Central Asia, Manchuria, Korea, and northern Vietnam.^[164] As with other empires during the classical period, Han China advanced significantly in the areas of government, education, science, and technology.^[165] The Han invented the compass, one of China's Four Great Inventions.^[166]



Obelisk of Axum, Ethiopia

In Africa, the [Kingdom of Kush](#) prospered through its interactions with both Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa.^[167] It ruled Egypt as the [Twenty-fifth Dynasty](#) from 712 to 650 BCE, then continued as an agricultural and trading state based in the city of [Meroë](#) until the fourth century CE.^[168] The [Kingdom of Aksum](#), centered in present-day Ethiopia, established itself by the 1st century CE as a major trading empire, dominating its neighbors in [South Arabia](#) and Kush and controlling the [Red Sea](#) trade.^[169] It minted its own currency and carved enormous monolithic [stelae](#) to mark its emperors' graves.^[170]

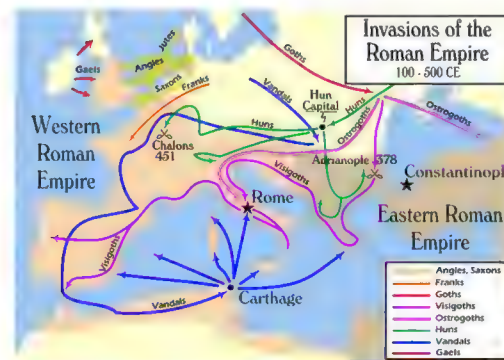
Successful regional empires were also established in the Americas, arising from cultures established as early as 2500 BCE.^[171] In Mesoamerica, vast [pre-Columbian](#) societies were built, the most notable being the [Zapotec civilization](#) (700 BCE – 1521 CE),^[172] and the Maya civilization, which reached its highest state of development during the Mesoamerican classic period (c. 250–900 CE),^[173] but continued throughout the post-classic period.^[174] The great Maya [city-states](#) slowly rose in number and prominence, and Maya culture spread throughout the [Yucatán](#) and surrounding areas.^[175] The Maya developed [a writing system](#) and used the concept of zero in their mathematics.^[176] West of the Maya area, in central Mexico, the city of Teotihuacan prospered due to its control of the [obsidian](#) trade.^[177] Its power peaked around 450 CE, when its 125,000–150,000 inhabitants made it one of the world's largest cities.^[178]

[Technology developed sporadically](#) in the ancient world.^[179] There were periods of rapid technological progress, such as the Greco-Roman era in the Mediterranean region.^[180] [Greek science, technology, and mathematics](#) are generally considered to have reached their peak during the Hellenistic period, typified by devices such as the [Antikythera mechanism](#).^[181] There were also periods of technological decay, such as the Roman Empire's decline and fall and the ensuing early medieval period.^[182] Two of the most important innovations were paper (China, 1st and 2nd centuries CE)^[183] and the [stirrup](#) (India, 2nd century BCE and Central Asia, 1st century CE),^[184] both of which diffused widely throughout the world. The Chinese learned to make silk and built massive engineering projects such as the [Great Wall of China](#) and the [Grand Canal](#).^[185] The Romans were also accomplished builders, inventing [concrete](#), perfecting the use

of [arches](#) in construction, and creating [aqueducts](#) to transport water over long distances to urban centers.^[186]

Most ancient societies practiced [slavery](#),^[187] which was particularly prevalent in [Athens](#) and [Rome](#), where slaves made up a large proportion of the population and were foundational to the economy.^[188] [Patriarchy](#) was also common, with men controlling more political and economic power than women.^[189]

Declines, falls, and resurgence

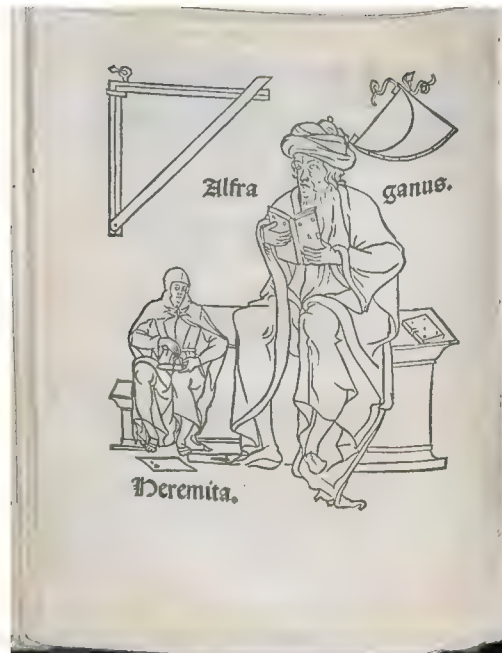


European migrations by mostly [Germanic peoples](#), 2nd–6th centuries

The ancient empires faced common problems associated with maintaining huge armies and supporting a central [bureaucracy](#).^[190] In Rome and Han China, the state began to decline, and [barbarian](#) pressure on the frontiers hastened internal dissolution.^[190] The Han dynasty fell into civil war in 220 CE, beginning the [Three Kingdoms](#) period, while its Roman counterpart became increasingly decentralized and divided about the same time in what is known as the [Crisis of the Third Century](#).^[191] From the Eurasian Steppe, [horse-based nomads](#) dominated a large part of the continent.^[192] The development of the stirrup and the use of [horse archers](#) made the nomads a constant threat to sedentary civilizations.^[193]

In the 4th century CE, the Roman Empire split into western and eastern regions, with usually separate emperors.^[194] The [Western Roman Empire](#) fell in 476 CE to German influence under [Odoacer](#) in the [Migration Period](#) of the [Germanic peoples](#).^[194] The Eastern Roman Empire, known as the [Byzantine Empire](#), was more long-lasting.^[195] In China, [dynasties](#) rose and fell, but, in sharp contrast to the Mediterranean-European world, political unity was always eventually restored.^[196] After the fall of the [Eastern Han dynasty](#) and the demise of the Three Kingdoms, nomadic tribes from the north began to invade, causing many Chinese people to flee southward.^[197]

Post-classical history



Portrait of [Alfraganus](#) in the *Compilatio astronomica*, 1493. [Islamic astronomers](#) began just before the 9th century to collect and translate [Indian](#), [Persian](#) and [Greek](#) astronomical texts, adding their own astronomy and enabling later, particularly European astronomy to build on.^[198] Symbolic for the post-classical period, a period of an increasing trans-regional literary culture, particularly in the sciences, spreading and building on methods of science.

The post-classical period, dated roughly from 500 to 1500 CE,^[m] was characterized by the rise and spread of major religions while civilization expanded to new parts of the world and trade between societies intensified.^[200] From the 10th to 13th centuries, the [Medieval Warm Period](#) in the northern hemisphere aided agriculture and led to population growth in parts of Europe and Asia.^[201] It was followed by the [Little Ice Age](#), which, along with the plagues of the 14th century, put downward pressure on the population of Eurasia.^[201] Major inventions of the period were [gunpowder](#), guns, and printing, all of which originated in China.^[202]

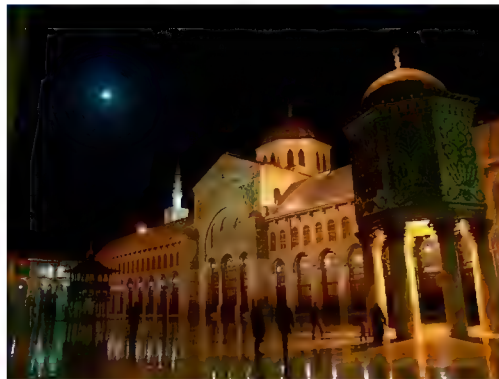
The post-classical period encompasses the [early Muslim conquests](#), the Islamic Golden Age, and the commencement and expansion of the [Arab slave trade](#), followed by the [Mongol invasions](#) and the founding of the Ottoman Empire.^[203] South Asia had a series of [middle kingdoms](#), followed by the establishment of [Islamic empires](#) in India.^[204]

In West Africa, the [Mali](#) and [Songhai Empires](#) rose.^[205] On the southeast coast of Africa, Arabic ports were established where gold, [spices](#), and other commodities were traded. This allowed

Africa to join the Southeast Asia trading system, bringing it contact with Asia; this resulted in the [Swahili culture](#).^[206]

China experienced the relatively successive Sui, Tang, [Song](#), [Yuan](#), and early [Ming dynasties](#).^[207] Middle Eastern trade routes along the Indian Ocean, and the Silk Road through the [Gobi Desert](#), provided limited economic and cultural contact between Asian and European civilizations.^[179] During the same period, civilizations in the Americas, such as the [Mississippians](#),^[208] [Aztecs](#),^[209] [Maya](#),^[210] and [Inca](#) reached their zenith.^[211]

Greater Middle East



[Umayyad Mosque in Damascus](#)

Before the advent of Islam in the 7th century, the Middle East was dominated by the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, which frequently fought each other for control of several disputed regions.^[212] This was also a cultural battle, with Byzantine [Christian culture](#) competing against Persian Zoroastrian traditions.^[213] The [birth of Islam](#) created a new contender that quickly surpassed both of these empires.^[214]

[Muhammad](#), the founder of Islam, initiated the [early Muslim conquests](#) in the 7th century.^[215] He established a new unified polity in [Arabia](#) that expanded rapidly under the [Rashidun Caliphate](#) and the [Umayyad Caliphate](#), culminating in the establishment of Muslim rule on three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) by 750 CE.^[216] The subsequent [Abbasid Caliphate](#) oversaw the Islamic Golden Age, an era of learning, science, and invention during which [philosophy](#), [art](#), and [literature](#) flourished.^{[217][n]} Scholars preserved and synthesized knowledge and skills of ancient Greece and Persia^[219] the manufacture of paper from China^[220] and the [decimal positional numbering system](#) from India.^[221] At the same time, they made significant original contributions in various fields, such as [Al-Khwarizmi](#)'s development of [algebra](#) and [Avicenna](#)'s comprehensive philosophical system.^[222] Islamic civilization expanded both by conquest and based on its merchant economy.^[223] Merchants brought goods and their Islamic faith to [China](#), [India](#), [Southeast Asia](#), and [Africa](#).^[224]

Arab domination of the Middle East ended in the mid-11th century with the arrival of the [Seljuk Turks](#), migrating south from the Turkic homelands.^[225] The Seljuks were challenged by Europe during the [Crusades](#), a series of religious wars aimed at rolling back Muslim territory and regaining control of the [Holy Land](#).^[226] The Crusades were ultimately unsuccessful and served more to weaken the Byzantine Empire, especially with the [sack of Constantinople](#) in 1204.^[227] In the early 13th century, a new wave of invaders, the [Mongols](#), swept through the region but were eventually eclipsed by the Turks and the founding of the Ottoman Empire in modern-day Turkey around 1299.^[228]

In the 7th century, North Africa saw the extinguishment of [Byzantine Africa](#) and the [Berber kingdoms](#) in the [Early Muslim conquests](#).^[229] From the 10th century, the Abbasid Caliphate's African territory was consumed by the [Fatimid Caliphate](#) centered on Egypt, who were supplanted by the [Ayyubids](#) in the 12th century, and then later by the [Mamluks](#) in the 13th century.^[230] In the [Maghreb](#) and [Western Sahara](#), the [Almoravids](#) dominated from the 11th century,^[231] until it was subsumed by the [Almohad Caliphate](#) in the 12th century.^[232] The Almohads' collapse gave rise to the [Marinids](#) in Morocco, the [Zayyanids](#) in Algeria, and the [Hafsids](#) in Tunisia.^[233]

The Caucasus was fought over in a [series of wars](#) between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires. However, the two opposing powers became exhausted due to continuous conflict. Hence, the Rashidun Caliphate was able to freely expand into the region during the early Muslim conquests.^[234] The Seljuk Turks later subjugated [Armenia](#) and [Georgia](#) in the 11th century. The Mongols subsequently invaded the Caucasus in the 13th century.^[235]

Steppe nomads from Central Asia continued to threaten sedentary societies in the post-classical era, but they also faced incursions from the Arabs and Chinese.^[236] China expanded into Central Asia during the [Sui dynasty](#) (581–618).^[237] The Chinese were confronted by [Turkic](#) nomads, who were becoming the most dominant ethnic group in the region.^[238] Originally the relationship was largely cooperative but in 630, the [Tang dynasty](#) began an offensive against the Turks by capturing areas of the [Ordos Desert](#).^[239] In the 8th century, Islam began to penetrate the region and soon became the sole faith of most of the population, though Buddhism remained strong in the east.^[240] From the 9th to 13th centuries, Central Asia was divided among several powerful states, including the [Samanid](#),^[241] [Seljuk](#),^[242] and [Khwarazmian Empires](#). These states were succeeded by the Mongols in the 13th century.^[243] In 1370, [Timur](#), a Turkic leader in the Mongol military tradition, conquered most of the region and founded the [Timurid Empire](#).^[244] Timur's large empire collapsed soon after his death,^[245] but his descendants retained control of a core area in Central Asia and Iran.^[246] They oversaw the [Timurid Renaissance](#) of art and architecture.^[247]

Europe



Notre-Dame de Paris, France

Since at least the 4th century, Christianity has played a prominent role in shaping the culture, values, and institutions of Western civilization, primarily through Catholicism and later also Protestantism.^[248] Europe during the Early Middle Ages was characterized by depopulation, deurbanization, and barbarian invasions, all of which had begun in late antiquity.^[249] The barbarian invaders formed their own new kingdoms in the remains of the Western Roman Empire.^[250] Although there were substantial changes in society and political structures, most of the new kingdoms incorporated existing Roman institutions.^[251] Christianity expanded in Western Europe, and monasteries were founded.^[252] In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Franks under the Carolingian dynasty established an empire covering much of Western Europe;^[253] it lasted until the 9th century, when it succumbed to pressure from new invaders—the Vikings, Magyars, and Arabs.^[254] It split into West Francia and East Francia, which developed into middle ages France and the Holy Roman Empire, middle ages Germany. During the Carolingian era, churches developed a form of musical notation called neume which became the basis for the modern notation system.^[255] Kievan Rus' expanded from its capital in Kiev to become the largest state in Europe by the 10th century. In 988, Vladimir the Great adopted Orthodox Christianity as the state religion.^[256]



13th-century French historiated initial with the three classes of medieval society: those who prayed (the clergy), those who fought (the knights), and those who worked (the peasantry)

During the [High Middle Ages](#), which began after 1000, the population of Europe increased as technological and agricultural innovations allowed trade to flourish and crop yields to increase.^[257] The establishment of the [feudal system](#) affected the structure of medieval society. It included [manorialism](#), the organization of peasants into villages that owed rents and labor service to nobles, and [vassalage](#), a political structure whereby [knights](#) and lower-status nobles owed military service to their overlords in return for the right to rents from lands and manors.^[258] Kingdoms became more centralized after the decentralizing effects of the breakup of the [Carolingian Empire](#).^[259] In 1054, the [Great Schism](#) between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches led to the prominent cultural differences between Western and Eastern Europe.^[260] The [Crusades](#) were a series of religious wars waged by Christians to wrest control of the Holy Land from the Muslims and succeeded for long enough to establish some [Crusader states](#) in the [Levant](#).^[261] Italian merchants imported slaves to work in households or in sugar processing.^[262] Intellectual life was marked by [scholasticism](#) and the founding of universities, while the building of [Gothic cathedrals and churches](#) was one of the outstanding artistic achievements of the age.^[263] The Middle Ages witnessed the first sustained [urbanization](#) of Northern and Western Europe and lasted until the beginning of the [early modern period](#) in the 16th century.^[264]

The [Mongols reached Europe](#) in 1236 and [conquered Kievan Rus'](#), along with briefly invading [Poland](#) and [Hungary](#).^[265] [Lithuania](#) cooperated with the Mongols but remained independent and in the late 14th century formed a [personal union with Poland](#).^[266] The [Late Middle Ages](#) were marked by difficulties and calamities.^[267] Famine, plague, and war devastated the population of Western Europe.^[268] The [Black Death](#) alone killed approximately 75 to 200 million people between 1347 and 1350.^[269] It was one of the deadliest pandemics in human history. Starting in Asia, the disease reached the Mediterranean and Western Europe during the late 1340s,^[270] and killed tens of millions of Europeans in six years; between a quarter and a third of the population perished.^[271]

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa was home to many different civilizations. In [Nubia](#), the [Kingdom of Kush](#) was succeeded by the Christian kingdoms of [Makuria](#), [Alodia](#), and [Nobatia](#). In the 7th century, Makuria conquered Nobatia to become the dominant power in the region and [resisted](#) Muslim expansion.^[272] They later entered a severe decline following civil war and [Arab migrations to the Sudan](#) and had disintegrated by the 15th century, giving rise to the [Funj Sultanate](#).^[273]



One of the eleven [Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela](#) constructed during the [Zagwe dynasty](#) in Ethiopia

In the [Horn of Africa](#), Islam spread among the [Somalis](#), while the [Kingdom of Aksum](#) declined from the 7th century following Muslim dominance over the [Red Sea](#) trade, and collapsed in the 10th century.^[274] The [Zagwe dynasty](#) emerged in the 12th century and contested hegemony with the [Sultanate of Shewa](#) and the powerful [Kingdom of Damot](#).^[275] In the 13th century, the Zagwe were overthrown by the [Solomonic dynasty](#) of the [Ethiopian Empire](#), while Shewa gave way to the [Walashma dynasty](#) of the [Sultanate of Ifat](#).^[276] Ethiopia emerged victorious against Ifat and occupied the Muslim states.^[277] The [Ajuran Sultanate](#) rose on the Horn's east coast to dominate the [Indian Ocean trade](#).^[278] Ifat was succeeded by the [Adal Sultanate](#) who reconquered much of the Muslim lands.^[279]

In the [Sahel](#) region of West Africa, the [Ghana Empire](#) formed from between the 2nd and 8th centuries, while from the 7th century the [Gao Empire](#) ruled to its east.^{[280][281]} Almoravid capture of royal [Aoudaghost](#) led to Ghana's conversion to Islam in the 11th century,^[282] and climatic changes led to Ghana's conquest by its vassal [Sosso](#) in the 13th century.^[283] Sosso was quickly overthrown by the [Mali Empire](#) who conquered Gao and dominated the [trans-Saharan trade](#).^[284] The [Mossi Kingdoms](#) were established to its south.^[285] To the east, the [Kanem–Bornu Empire](#) ruled from the 6th century, and projected power over the [Hausa Kingdoms](#).^{[286][287]} The 15th century saw the crumbling of the Mali Empire, with the dominant power in the region becoming the [Songhai Empire](#) centered on [Gao](#).^[288]



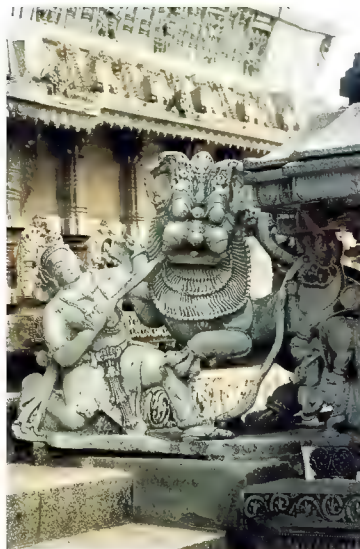
Benin Bronze head from
Nigeria

In the forest regions of West Africa, various kingdoms and empires flourished, such as the Yoruba empires of Ife and Oyo,^[289] the Igbo Kingdom of Nri,^[290] the Edo Kingdom of Benin (famous for its art),^[291] the Dagomba Kingdom of Dagbon,^[292] and the Akan kingdom of Bonoman.^[293] They came into contact with the Portuguese in the 15th century which saw the start of the Atlantic slave trade.

In the Congo Basin by the 13th century there were three main confederations of states: the Seven Kingdoms, Mpemba, and one led by Vungu.^{[294]:24–25} In the 14th century the Kingdom of Kongo emerged and dominated the region.^[294] Further east, the Luba Empire was founded in the Upemba Depression in the 15th century.^[295] In the northern Great Lakes, the Empire of Kitara rose around the 11th century, famed for its total lack of written record. It collapsed in the 15th century following Luo migrations to the region.^[296]

On the Swahili coast the Swahili city-states thrived off of the Indian Ocean trade and gradually Islamized, giving rise to the Kilwa Sultanate from the 10th century.^{[297][298]} Madagascar was settled by Austronesian peoples between the 5th and 7th centuries, as societies organized at the behest of *hasina*.^{[299]:43, 52–53} In Southern Africa, early kingdoms included Mapela and Mapungubwe,^[300] followed by the Kingdom of Zimbabwe in the 13th century, and the Mutapa Empire in the 15th century.^[301]

South Asia



Chennakesava Temple, Belur,
India

After the fall of the Gupta Empire in 550 CE, [North India](#) was divided into a complex and fluid network of smaller kingdoms.^[302] Early [Muslim incursions](#) began in the northwest in 711 CE, when the Arab Umayyad Caliphate [conquered](#) much of present-day Pakistan.^[216] The Arab military advance was largely halted at that point, but Islam still spread in India, largely due to the influence of Arab merchants along the western coast.^[206] The 9th century saw the [Tripartite Struggle](#) for control of North India between the [Pratihara](#), [Pala](#), and [Rashtrakuta Empires](#).^[303]

Post-classical dynasties in South India included those of the [Chalukyas](#), [Hoysalas](#), and [Cholas](#).^[304] Literature, architecture, sculpture, and painting flourished under the patronage of these kings.^[305] Some of the other important states that emerged in South India during this time included the [Bahmani Sultanate](#) and the [Vijayanagara Empire](#).^[306]

Northeast Asia

After a period of relative disunity, [China](#) was reunified by the Sui dynasty in 589.^[307] Under the succeeding Tang dynasty (618–907), China entered a golden age during which political stability and economic prosperity were accompanied by literary and artistic accomplishment, like the [poetry](#) of [Li Bai](#) and [Du Fu](#).^{[308][309]} The Sui and Tang instituted the long-lasting [imperial examination](#) system, under which administrative positions were open only to those who passed an arduous test on Confucian thought and the [Chinese classics](#).^[310] China competed with [Tibet](#) (618–842) for control of areas in Inner Asia.^[311] However, the Tang dynasty eventually splintered. After [half a century of turmoil](#), the Song dynasty reunified much of China.^[312] Pressure from nomadic empires to the north became increasingly urgent.^[313] By 1127, northern China had been lost to the [Jurchens](#) in the [Jin–Song Wars](#), and the Mongols [conquered all of China](#) in 1279.^[314]

After about a century of Mongol Yuan dynasty rule, the ethnic Chinese reasserted control with the founding of the Ming dynasty in 1368.^[313]



Battle during the 1281 Mongol invasion of Japan

In [Japan](#), the imperial lineage was established during the 3rd century CE, and a centralized state developed during the [Yamato period](#) (c. 300–710).^[315] Buddhism was introduced, and there was an emphasis on the adoption of elements of Chinese culture and Confucianism.^[316] The [Nara period](#) (710–794) was characterized by the appearance of a nascent [literary culture](#), as well as the development of Buddhist-inspired artwork and [architecture](#).^[317] The [Heian period](#) (794–1185) saw the peak of imperial power, followed by the rise of militarized clans and the [samurai](#).^[318] It was during the Heian period that [Murasaki Shikibu](#) penned *The Tale of Genji*, sometimes considered the world's first novel.^[319] From 1185 to 1868, Japan was dominated by powerful regional lords ([daimyos](#)) and the military rule of warlords ([shoguns](#)) such as the [Ashikaga](#) and [Tokugawa shogunates](#).^[320] The emperor remained but did not wield significant influence.^[321] Meanwhile, the power of merchants grew.^[322] An influential art style known as [ukiyo-e](#) arose during the Tokugawa years, consisting of [woodblock prints](#) which originally depicted famous [courtesans](#).^[323]

Post-classical [Korea](#) saw the end of the [Three Kingdoms](#) era, in which the kingdoms of [Goguryeo](#), [Baekje](#), and [Silla](#) had competed for hegemony.^[324] This period ended when Silla conquered Baekje in 660 and Goguryeo in 668,^[325] marking the beginning of the [Northern and Southern States period](#), with [Unified Silla](#) in the south and [Balhae](#), a successor state to Goguryeo, in the north.^[326] In 892 CE, this arrangement reverted to the [Later Three Kingdoms](#), with Goguryeo^[o] emerging as dominant, unifying the entire peninsula by 936.^[327] The founding Goryeo dynasty ruled until 1392, succeeded by the [Joseon dynasty](#),^[328] which ruled for approximately 500 years.^[329]

In [Mongolia](#), [Genghis Khan](#) united various Mongol and Turkic tribes under one banner in 1206.^[330] The [Mongol Empire](#) expanded to comprise all of China and Central Asia, as well as large parts of Russia and the Middle East, to become [the largest contiguous empire in history](#).^[331] After [Möngke Khan](#) died in 1259,^[332] the Mongol Empire was [divided into four successor states](#): the [Yuan Dynasty](#) in China, the [Chagatai Khanate](#) in Central Asia, the [Golden Horde](#) in Eastern Europe and Russia, and the [Ilkhanate](#) in Iran.^[333]

Southeast Asia



Angkor Wat temple complex, Cambodia,
early 12th century

The Southeast Asian polity of [Funan](#), which had originated in the 2nd century CE, went into decline in the 6th century as Chinese trade routes shifted away from its ports. It was replaced by the [Khmer Empire](#) in 802 CE.^[334] The capital city of the [Khmers](#) at [Angkor](#) was the most extensive city in the world before the industrial age and contained [Angkor Wat](#), the world's largest religious monument.^[335] The [Sukhothai](#) (mid-13th century) and [Ayutthaya Kingdoms](#) (1351) were major powers of the [Thais](#), who were influenced by the Khmers.^[336]

Starting in the 9th century, the [Pagan Kingdom](#) rose to prominence in modern [Myanmar](#).^[337] Its collapse brought about political fragmentation that ended with the rise of the [Toungoo Empire](#) in the 16th century.^[338] Other notable kingdoms of the period include [Srivijaya](#)^[339] and [Lavo](#) (both coming into prominence in the 7th century), [Champa](#)^[340] and [Hariphunchai](#) (both about 750),^[341] [Đại Việt](#) (968),^[342] [Lan Na](#) (13th century),^[343] [Majapahit](#) (1293),^[344] [Lan Xang](#) (1353),^[345] and [Ava](#) (1365).^[346] Hinduism and Buddhism had been spreading in Southeast Asia since the 1st century CE when, beginning in the 13th century, Islam arrived and made its way to regions such as present-day Indonesia.^[347] This period also saw the emergence of the [Malay states](#), including [Brunei](#) and [Malacca](#).^[348] In the [Philippines](#), several polities were formed such as [Tondo](#), [Cebu](#), and [Butuan](#).^[349]

Oceania

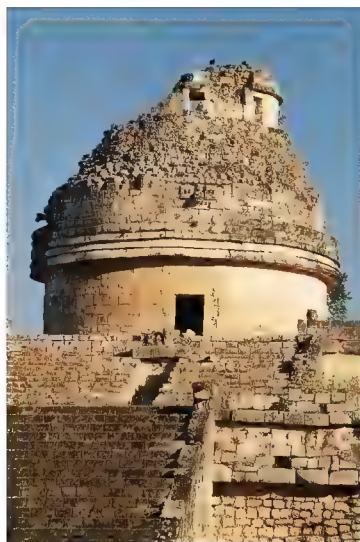


Moai, Easter Island^[350]

The [Polynesians](#), descendants of the [Lapita peoples](#), colonized vast reaches of [Remote Oceania](#) beginning around 1000 CE.^{[351][p]} Their voyages resulted in the colonization of hundreds of islands including the [Marquesas](#), Hawaii, [Rapa Nui](#) (Easter Island), and New Zealand.^[353]

The [Tu'i Tonga Empire](#) was founded in the 10th century CE and expanded between 1250 and 1500.^[354] Tongan culture, language, and hegemony spread widely throughout eastern [Melanesia](#), [Micronesia](#), and central [Polynesia](#) during this period.^[355] They influenced east 'Uvea, [Rotuma](#), [Futuna](#), [Samoa](#), and [Niue](#), as well as specific islands and parts of [Micronesia](#), [Vanuatu](#), and [New Caledonia](#).^[356] In Northern Australia, there is evidence that [Aboriginal Australians](#) regularly traded with [Makassan trepangers](#) from Indonesia before the arrival of Europeans.^[357] In Aboriginal societies, leadership was based on achievement while the social structure of Polynesian societies was characterized by hereditary [chiefdoms](#).^[358]

Americas



Maya observatory, Chichen
Itza, Mexico



Machu Picchu, Inca Empire, Peru

In North America, this period saw the rise of the [Mississippian culture](#) in the modern-day United States c. 950 CE,^[359] marked by the extensive 11th-century urban complex at [Cahokia](#).^[360] The [Ancestral Puebloans](#) and their predecessors (9th–13th centuries) built extensive permanent settlements, including stone structures that remained the largest buildings in North America until the 19th century.^[361]

In Mesoamerica, the [Teotihuacan civilization](#) fell and the [classic Maya collapse](#) occurred.^[362] The [Aztec Empire](#) came to dominate much of Mesoamerica in the 14th and 15th centuries.^[363]

In South America, the 15th century saw the rise of the Inca.^[211] The [Inca Empire](#), with its capital at [Cusco](#), spanned the entire [Andes](#), making it the most extensive [pre-Columbian civilization](#).^[364] The Inca were prosperous and advanced, known for an excellent [road system](#) and elegant stonework.^[365]

Early modern period

The early modern period is the era following the European Middle Ages until 1789 or 1800.^[q] A common break with the medieval period is placed between 1450 and 1500 which includes a number of significant events: the fall of [Constantinople](#) to the [Ottoman Empire](#), the spread of [printing](#) and European voyages of discovery to America and along the African coast.^[367] The nature of warfare evolved as the size and organization of military forces on land and sea increased, alongside the wider propagation of gunpowder.^[368] The early modern period is significant for the start of [proto-globalization](#),^[369] increasingly centralized bureaucratic states^[370] and early forms of [capitalism](#).^[366] European powers also began colonizing large parts of the world through maritime empires: first the [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish Empires](#), then the [French](#), [English](#), and [Dutch Empires](#).^[371] Historians still debate the causes of Europe's rise, which is known as the [Great Divergence](#).^[372]



Japanese depiction of a Portuguese [carrack](#), a result of globalizing maritime trade

Capitalist economies emerged, initially in the [northern Italian republics](#) and some Asian port cities.^[373] European states practiced [mercantilism](#) by implementing one-sided trade policies designed to benefit the mother country at the expense of its colonies.^[374] Starting at the end of the 15th century, the Portuguese established [trading posts](#) across Africa, Asia, and Brazil, for commodities like gold and spices while also practicing slavery.^[375] In the 17th century, private [chartered companies](#) were established, such as the [English East India Company](#) in 1600 – often described as the first [multinational corporation](#) – and the [Dutch East India Company](#) in 1602.^[376] Meanwhile, in much of the European sphere, serfdom declined and eventually disappeared while the power of the Catholic Church waned.^[377]

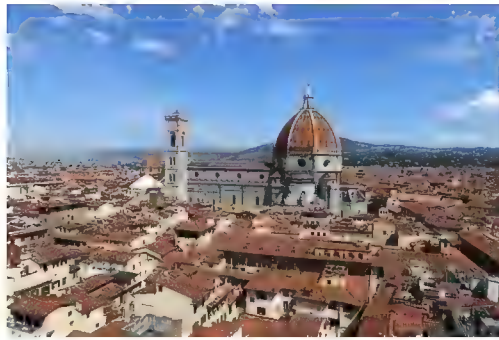
The [Age of Discovery](#) was the first period in which the [Old World](#) engaged in substantial cultural, material, and biological exchange with the [New World](#). It began in the late 15th century, when [Portugal](#) and [Castile](#) sent the first exploratory voyages to the Americas, where [Christopher Columbus](#) first arrived in 1492. Global integration continued as [European colonization of the Americas](#) initiated the [Columbian exchange](#): the exchange of plants, animals, foods, human populations (including slaves), [communicable diseases](#), and culture between the [Eastern](#) and [Western Hemispheres](#).^[378] It was one of history's most important global events, involving ecology and agriculture.^[379] New crops brought from the Americas by 16th-century European seafarers substantially contributed to world population growth.^[380]

Greater Middle East

The Ottoman Empire quickly came to dominate the Middle East after conquering Constantinople in 1453, which marked the end of the Byzantine Empire.^[381] Persia came under the rule of the [Safavids](#) in 1501,^[382] succeeded by the [Afshars](#) in 1736, the [Zands](#) in 1751, and the [Qajars](#) in 1794.^[383] The Safavids [established Shia Islam](#) as Persia's official religion, thus giving Persia a separate identity from its [Sunni](#) neighbors.^[384] Along with the [Mughals](#) in India, the Ottomans and Safavids are known as the [gunpowder empires](#) because of their early adoption of

firearms.^[385] Throughout the 16th century the Ottomans conquered all of North Africa save for Morocco, which came under the rule of the [Saadi dynasty](#) at the same time, and then the [Alawi dynasty](#) in the 17th century.^{[386][387][388]} At the end of the 18th century, the [Russian Empire](#) began its [conquest](#) of the Caucasus.^[389] The [Uzbeks](#) replaced the [Timurids](#) as the preeminent power in Central Asia.^[390]

Europe



Florence, birthplace of the [Italian Renaissance](#)

The early modern period in Europe was an era of intense intellectual ferment. The [Renaissance](#) – the "rebirth" of classical culture, beginning in [Italy](#) in the 14th century and extending into the 16th^[r] – comprised the rediscovery of the [classical world's](#) cultural, scientific, and technological achievements, and the economic and social rise of Europe.^[392] This period is also celebrated for its artistic and literary attainments.^[393] [Petrarch's](#) poetry, [Giovanni Boccaccio's](#) *Decameron*, and the paintings and sculptures of [Leonardo da Vinci](#) and [Albrecht Dürer](#), as part of the [Northern Renaissance](#), are some of the great works of the age.^[393] After the Renaissance came the [Reformation](#), an anti-clerical theological and social movement started in Germany by [Martin Luther](#) that resulted in the creation of [Protestant Christianity](#).^[394]

The Renaissance also engendered a culture of inquisitiveness which ultimately led to [humanism](#)^[395] and the [Scientific Revolution](#), an effort to understand the natural world through direct observation and experiment.^[396] The success of the new scientific techniques inspired attempts to apply them to political and social affairs, known as the [Enlightenment](#), by thinkers such as [John Locke](#) and [Immanuel Kant](#).^[397] This development was accompanied by [secularization](#) as a continued decline of the influence of religious beliefs and authorities in the public and private spheres.^[398] [Johannes Gutenberg's](#) invention of [movable type](#) printing in 1440^[s] helped spread the ideas of the new intellectual movements.^[400]



Wittenberg, birthplace of Protestantism

In addition to changes wrought by incipient capitalism and colonialism, early modern Europeans experienced an increase in the power of the state.^[401] Absolute monarchs in France, Russia, the Habsburg lands, and Prussia produced powerful centralized states, with strong armies and efficient bureaucracies, all under the control of the king.^[402] In Russia, Ivan the Terrible was crowned in 1547 as the first tsar of Russia, and by annexing the Turkic khanates in the east, transformed Russia into a regional power, eventually replacing the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a major power in Eastern Europe.^[403] The countries of Western Europe, while expanding prodigiously through technological advances and colonial conquest, competed with each other economically and militarily in a state of almost constant war.^[404] Wars of particular note included the Thirty Years' War, the War of the Spanish Succession, the Seven Years' War, and the French Revolutionary Wars.^[405] The French Revolution, starting in 1789, laid the groundwork of liberal democracy by overthrowing monarchy. It led to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century.^[406]

Sub-Saharan Africa

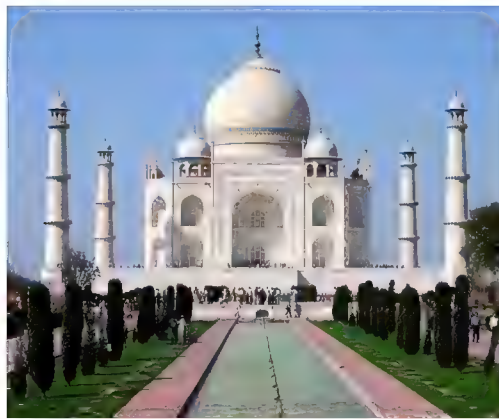
In the Horn of Africa, there was the Oromo expansion in the 16th century, which weakened Ethiopia and caused Adal's collapse. Ajuran was succeeded by the Geledi Sultanate.^[407] In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Ethiopia rapidly expanded.^[408]

In West Africa, the Songhai Empire fell to Moroccan invasion in the late 16th century.^[409] They were succeeded by the Bamana Empire. The Fula jihads beginning in the 18th century led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, the Massina Empire, and the Tukolor Empire.^{[410][411][412]} In the forest regions, the Asante Empire was established in present-day Ghana.^[413] Between 1515 and 1800, 8 million Africans were exported in the Atlantic slave trade.^[414]

In the Congo Basin, Kongo fought three wars against the Portuguese who had begun colonizing Angola, ending in the conquest of Ndongo in the 17th century.^[415] Further east, the Lunda Empire rose to dominate the region.^[416] It fell to the Chokwe in the 19th century.^[417] In the northern Great Lakes, there were the kingdoms of Bunyoro-Kitara, Buganda, and Rwanda among others.^[418]

Kilwa was conquered by the Portuguese in the 16th century as they began colonizing Mozambique. They were defeated by the Omani Empire who took control of the Swahili coast.^[419] In Madagascar the 16th century onward saw the emergence of Imerina, the Betsileo kingdoms, and the Sakalava empire;^[420] Imerina conquered most of the island in the 19th century.^[421] In the Zambezi Basin Mutapa was followed by the Rozvi Empire,^[422] with Maravi around Lake Malawi to its north.^[423] Mthwakazi succeeded Rozvi.^[424] Further south, the Dutch began colonizing South Africa in the 16th century, who lost it to the British.^[425] In the 19th century Dutch settlers formed various Boer Republics, while the Mfecane ravaged the region and led to the establishment of various African kingdoms.^[426]

South Asia



Taj Mahal, Mughal Empire, India

In the Indian subcontinent, the Mughal Empire was established under Babur in 1526 and lasted for two centuries.^[427] Starting in the northwest, it brought the entire subcontinent under Muslim rule by the late 17th century,^[428] except for the southernmost Indian provinces, which remained independent.^[429] To resist the Muslim rulers, the Hindu Maratha Empire was founded by Shivaji on the western coast in 1674.^[430] The Marathas gradually gained territory from the Mughals over several decades, particularly in the Mughal–Maratha Wars (1680–1707).^[431]

Sikhism developed at the end of the 15th century from the spiritual teachings of ten gurus.^[432] In 1799, Ranjit Singh established the Sikh Empire in the Punjab.^[433]

Northeast Asia



Ming dynasty section, Great Wall of China

In 1644, the Ming were supplanted by the Qing,^[434] the last Chinese imperial dynasty, which ruled until 1912.^[435] Japan experienced its Azuchi–Momoyama period (1568–1600), followed by the Edo period (1600–1868).^[436] The Korean Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) ruled throughout this period, repelling invasions from Japan and China in the 16th and 17th centuries.^[437] Expanded maritime trade with Europe significantly affected China and Japan during this period, particularly through the Portuguese in Macau and the Dutch in Nagasaki.^[438] However, China and Japan later pursued isolationist policies^[t] designed to eliminate foreign influences.^[439]

Southeast Asia

In 1511, the Portuguese overthrew the Malacca Sultanate in present-day Malaysia and Indonesian Sumatra.^[440] The Portuguese held this important trading territory (and the valuable associated navigational strait) until overthrown by the Dutch in 1641.^[376] The Johor Sultanate, centered on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, became the dominant trading power in the region.^[441]

European colonization expanded with the Dutch in Indonesia, the Portuguese in Timor, and the Spanish in the Philippines.^[442]

Oceania

The Pacific Islands of Oceania were also affected by European contact, starting with the circumnavigational voyage of Ferdinand Magellan (1519–1522),^[u] who landed in the Marianas and other islands.^[443] Abel Tasman (1642–1644) sailed to present-day Australia, New Zealand, and nearby islands.^[444] James Cook (1768–1779) made the first recorded European contact with Hawaii.^[445] In 1788, Britain founded its first Australian colony.^[446]

Americas

Several European powers colonized the Americas, largely displacing the native populations and conquering the advanced civilizations of the Aztecs and Inca.^[447] Diseases introduced by Europeans devastated American societies, killing 60–90 million people by 1600 and reducing the population by 90–95%.^[448] In some cases, colonial policies included the deliberate genocide of indigenous peoples.^[449] Spain, Portugal, Britain, and France all made extensive territorial claims, and undertook large-scale settlement, including the importation of large numbers of African slaves.^[450] One side-effect of the slave trade was cultural exchange through which various African traditions found their way to the Americas, including cuisine, music, and dance.^{[451][v]} Portugal claimed Brazil, while Spain seized the rest of South America, Mesoamerica, and southern North America.^[452] The Spanish mined and exported prodigious amounts of gold and silver, leading to a surge in inflation known as the Price Revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries in Western Europe.^[453]

In North America, Britain colonized the east coast while France settled the central region.^[454] Russia made incursions into the northwest coast of North America, with its first colony in present-day Alaska in 1784,^[455] and the outpost of Fort Ross in present-day California in 1812.^[456] France lost its North American territory to England and Spain after the Seven Years' War (1756–1763).^[457] Britain's Thirteen Colonies declared independence as the United States in 1776, ratified by the Treaty of Paris in 1783, ending the American Revolutionary War.^[458] In 1791, African slaves launched a successful rebellion in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. France won back its continental claims from Spain in 1800, but sold them to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.^[459]

Modern era

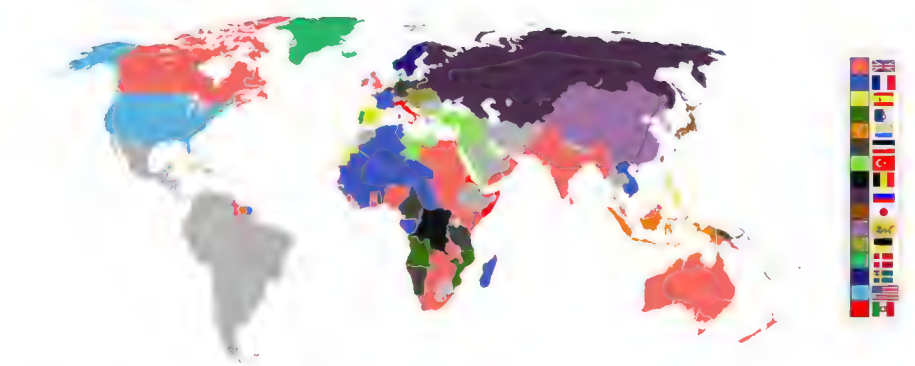
Long nineteenth century



James Watt's steam engine powered the Industrial Revolution.

The [long nineteenth century](#) traditionally starts with the [French Revolution](#) in 1789,^[w] and lasts until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.^[462] It saw the global spread of the Industrial Revolution, the greatest transformation of the world economy since the Neolithic Revolution.^[463] The Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain around 1770 and used new modes of production—the factory, [mass production](#), and [mechanization](#)—to manufacture a wide array of goods faster while using less labor than previously required.^[464]

Industrialization raised the global [standard of living](#) but caused upheaval as factory owners and workers clashed over wages and working conditions.^[465] Along with industrialization came modern [globalization](#), the increasing interconnection of world regions in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.^[466] Globalization began in the early 19th century and was enabled by improved transportation technologies such as railroads and [steamships](#).^[467]



Empires of the world in 1898

European empires [lost territories in Latin America](#), which [won independence](#) by the 1820s through military campaigns,^[468] but expanded elsewhere as their industrial economies gave them an advantage over the rest of the world.^[469] Britain gained control of the Indian subcontinent, Burma, Malaya, North Borneo, [Hong Kong](#), and [Aden](#); the French took Indochina; and the Dutch cemented their rule over Indonesia.^[470] The British also colonized Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa with large numbers of British colonists emigrating to these colonies.^[471]

Russia colonized large pre-agricultural areas of Siberia.^[472] The United States completed its [westward expansion](#), establishing control over the territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast.^[473]

In the late 19th century to early 20th century, the European powers, driven by the [Second Industrial Revolution](#), rapidly [conquered and colonized almost the entirety of Africa](#).^[474] Only Ethiopia and [Liberia](#) remained independent.^[475] Imperial rule in Africa involved many atrocities such as [those in the Congo Free State](#) and the [Herero and Nama genocide](#).^[476]

Within Europe, economic and military competition fostered the creation and consolidation of nation-states, and other ethno-cultural communities began to identify themselves as distinctive nations with aspirations for their own cultural and political autonomy.^[477] This [nationalism](#)

became important to peoples across the world in the 19th and 20th centuries.^[478] In the [first wave of democratization](#), between 1828 and 1926, democratic institutions were established in 33 countries worldwide.^[479]

Most of the world [abolished slavery](#) and serfdom in the 19th century.^[480] Over several decades, beginning in the late 19th century and continuing throughout the 20th,^[481] in many countries the [women's suffrage](#) movement won women the right to vote,^[482] and women began to enjoy greater access to education and to professions beyond domestic employment.^[483]



The first airplane, the [Wright Flyer](#), flew on 17 December 1903.

In response to encroachment by European powers, several countries undertook programs of industrialization and political reform along Western lines.^[484] The [Meiji Restoration](#) in [Japan](#) led to the establishment of a [colonial empire](#), while the [tanzimat](#) reforms in the Ottoman Empire did little to slow the Ottoman decline.^[485] China achieved some success with its [Self-Strengthening Movement](#) but was devastated by the [Taiping Rebellion](#), history's bloodiest civil war, which between 1850 and 1864 killed 20–30 million people.^[486]

By the end of the century, the United States became the world's largest economy.^[487] During the [Second Industrial Revolution](#), new technological advances, involving [electric power](#), the [internal combustion engine](#), and [assembly-line](#) manufacturing, further increased productivity.^[488] Technological innovations also provided new avenues for artistic expression through the media of [photography](#), [sound recording](#), and [film](#).^[489]

Meanwhile, [industrial pollution](#) and [environmental](#) degradation accelerated drastically.^[490] [Balloon flight](#) had been invented in the late 18th century, but it was only at the beginning of the 20th century that [powered aircraft were developed](#).^[491]

The 20th century opened with Europe at an apex of wealth and power.^[492] Much of the world was under its direct colonial control or its indirect influence through heavily Europeanized nations like the United States and Japan.^[493] As the century unfolded, however, the global system dominated by rival powers experienced severe strains and ultimately yielded to a more fluid structure of independent [nation states](#).^[494]

World wars

This transformation was catalyzed by wars of unparalleled scope and devastation. [World War I](#) was a global conflict from 1914 to 1918 between [the Allies](#), led by France, Russia, and the United Kingdom, and the [Central Powers](#), led by Germany, [Austria-Hungary](#), the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. It had an estimated death toll ranging from 10 to 22.5 million and resulted in the collapse of four empires – the [Austro-Hungarian](#), [German](#), Ottoman, and Russian Empires.^[495] Its new emphasis on industrial technology had made traditional military tactics obsolete.^[496]

The [Armenian](#), [Assyrian](#), and [Greek genocides](#) saw the systematic destruction, mass murder, and expulsion of those populations in the Ottoman Empire.^[497] From 1918 to 1920, the [Spanish flu](#) caused the deaths of at least 25 million people.^[498]

In the war's aftermath a [League of Nations](#) was formed in the hope of averting future international conflicts;^[499] and powerful ideologies rose to prominence. The [Russian Revolution](#) of 1917 created the first [communist](#) state,^[500] while the 1920s and 1930s saw [fascist](#) political parties gain control in [Italy](#) and [Germany](#).^{[501][x]} The Soviet Union, during [Joseph Stalin's](#) rule from 1924 to 1953, committed [countless atrocities](#) against its own people, including [mass purges](#), [forced labor camps](#), and [widespread famine](#) caused by state policies.^[503]

Ongoing national rivalries, exacerbated by the economic turmoil of the [Great Depression](#), helped precipitate [World War II](#).^[504] In that war, the vast majority of the world's countries, including all the [great powers](#), fought as part of two opposing [military alliances](#): the [Allies](#) and the [Axis](#). The leading Axis powers were Germany, Japan, and Italy,^[505] while the United Kingdom, the United States, the [Soviet Union](#), and the [Republic of China](#) were the "[Big Four](#)" Allied powers.^[506]



[Atomic bombing of Nagasaki](#),
1945

The [militaristic](#) governments of Germany and Japan pursued an ultimately doomed course of [imperialist expansionism](#). In the course of doing so, Germany [orchestrated](#) the [genocide](#) of 6 million Jews in [the Holocaust](#), and of millions of non-Jews across [German-occupied Europe](#),^[507] while Japan [murdered](#) millions of Chinese.^[508] The war also saw the introduction and

use of [nuclear weapons](#), which brought unprecedented destruction and ultimately led to Japan's surrender.^[509] Estimates of the war's total casualties range from 55 to 80 million.^[510]

Contemporary history

When World War II ended in 1945, the [United Nations](#) was founded in the hope of preventing future wars,^[511] as the [League of Nations](#) had been formed following World War I.^[512] The United Nations championed the [human rights movement](#), in 1948 adopting a [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).^[513] Several European countries formed what would evolve into a 27-member-state economic and political community, the [European Union](#).^[514]

World War II had opened the way for the advance of communism into Eastern and Central Europe, China, [North Korea](#), [North Vietnam](#), and [Cuba](#).^[515] To [contain](#) this advance, the United States established a global network of alliances.^[516] The largest, [NATO](#), was established in 1949 and eventually [grew to include 32 member states](#).^[517] In response, in 1955 the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies formed the [Warsaw Pact](#) mutual-defense treaty.^[518]



Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989

The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the primary global powers in the aftermath of World War II.^[519] Both nations harbored deep suspicions and fears about the global spread of the other's political-economic system — capitalism for the United States and communism for the Soviet Union.^[520] This mutual distrust sparked the [Cold War](#), a 45-year stand-off and [arms race](#) between the two nations and their allies.^[521]

With the development of nuclear weapons during World War II and their subsequent [proliferation](#), all of humanity was put at risk of [nuclear war](#) between the two superpowers, as demonstrated by [many incidents](#), most prominently the October 1962 [Cuban Missile Crisis](#).^[522] Such war [being viewed as impractical](#), the superpowers instead waged [proxy wars](#) in non-nuclear-armed [Third World](#) countries.^[523] The Cold War ended peacefully in 1991 after the [Soviet Union collapsed](#),^[524] partly due to its inability to compete economically with the United States and Western Europe.^[525]

Cold War preparations to deter or fight a [third world war](#) accelerated advances in technologies that, though conceptualized before World War II, had been implemented for that war's exigencies, such as [jet aircraft](#),^[526] [rocketry](#),^[527] and computers.^[528] In the decades after World War II, these advances led to jet travel,^[526] [artificial satellites](#) with innumerable applications,^[529] including [GPS](#),^[530] and the [Internet](#),^[529] which in the 1990s began to gain traction as a form of communication.^[531] These inventions revolutionized the movement of people, ideas, and information.^[532]



Last Moon landing: [Apollo 17](#) (1972)

The second half of the 20th century also saw groundbreaking scientific and technological developments such as the discovery of the structure of [DNA](#)^[533] and [DNA sequencing](#),^[534] the worldwide [eradication of smallpox](#),^[535] the [Green Revolution](#) in agriculture,^[536] the discovery of [plate tectonics](#),^[537] the [moon landings](#),^[538] crewed and uncrewed [exploration of space](#),^[539] advances in [energy technologies](#),^[540] and foundational discoveries in [physics](#) phenomena ranging from the smallest entities ([particle physics](#)) to the greatest ([physical cosmology](#)).^[537]

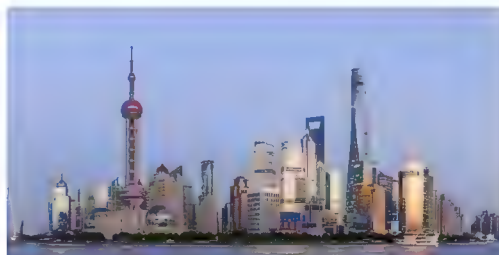
These technical innovations had far-reaching effects.^[541] During the 20th century the world's population quadrupled to six billion, while world economic output increased by a factor of 20.^[542] Toward the end of the 20th century, the rate of [population growth](#) started to decline, in part because of increased awareness of [family planning](#) and better access to [contraceptives](#).^[543] Parts of the world now have [sub-replacement fertility rates](#).^[544]

[Public health](#) measures and advances in [medical science](#) contributed to a sharp increase in global [life expectancy](#) at birth from about 31 years in 1900 to over 66 years in 2000.^{[545][y]} In 1820, 75% of humanity lived on less than one dollar a day, while in 2001 only about 20% did.^[547] At the same time, economic inequality increased both within individual countries and between rich and poor countries.^[548] The importance of public education had already begun to increase in the 18th and 19th centuries^[z] but it was not until the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century that compulsory free education was provided to [most children worldwide](#).^{[550][aa]}

In China, the [Maoist](#) government implemented industrialization and [collectivization](#) policies as part of the [Great Leap Forward](#) (1958–1962), leading to the [starvation deaths](#) (1959–1961) of 30–40 million people.^[552] After these policies were rescinded, China entered a period of [economic liberalization](#) and rapid growth, with the economy expanding by 6.6% per year from 1978 to 2003.^[553]

In the postwar decades, in a process of [decolonization](#), the [African](#), [Asian](#), and [Oceanian](#) colonies of European empires won their formal independence.^[554] Postcolonial states in Africa struggled to grow their economies, facing structural barriers such as reliance on the export of [commodities](#) rather than manufactured goods.^[555] Sub-Saharan Africa was the world region hit hardest by the [HIV/AIDS pandemic](#) of the late 20th century.^[556] Moreover, Africa experienced high levels of violence, as in the [Second Congo War](#) (1998–2003), the deadliest conflict since World War II.^[557]

The [Near East](#) experienced numerous conflicts, including the [Iran-Iraq War](#), the [first](#) and [second Gulf wars](#), and the [Syrian Civil War](#), as well as [tensions and conflicts between Israel and Palestine](#).^[558] Development efforts in Latin America were hindered by over-reliance on commodity exports^[559] and by political instability, some of it caused by [United States involvement in regime change in Latin America](#).^[560]



[Shanghai](#). China urbanized rapidly in the 21st century.



[COVID-19 pandemic](#), 2020

The early 21st century was marked by growing [economic globalization](#) and [integration](#),^[561] which brought both benefits and risks to interlinked economies, as exemplified by the [Great Recession](#) of the late 2000s and early 2010s.^[562] Communications expanded, with [smartphones](#) and [social media](#) becoming ubiquitous worldwide by the mid-2010s. By the early 2020s, [artificial intelligence](#) systems improved to the point of outperforming humans at many circumscribed tasks.^[563]

The influence of religion continued to decline in many Western countries, while some parts of the Muslim world saw the rise of [fundamentalist movements](#).^[564] In 2020, the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) substantially disrupted global trading, caused recessions in the global economy, and spurred cultural [paradigm shifts](#).^[565]

Concerns grew as [existential threats](#) from [environmental degradation](#) and [global warming](#) became increasingly evident,^[566] while [mitigation efforts](#), including a shift to [sustainable energy](#), made gradual progress.^[567]

Academic research

The study of human history has a long tradition and early precursors were already practiced in the ancient period as attempts to provide comprehensive accounts of the history of the world.^[ab] Most research before the 20th century focused on histories of individual communities and societies after the prehistoric period. This changed in the late 20th century, when attempts to integrate the diverse narratives into a common context reaching back to the emergence of the first humans became a central research topic.^[569] This transition to a widened perspective was accompanied by questioning [Eurocentrism](#) and the Western-focused perspective that had previously dominated academic history.^[570]

Like in other historical disciplines, the [methodology](#) of analyzing textual sources to construct narratives and interpretations of past events plays a central role in the study of human history. The scope of its topic poses the unique challenge of synthesizing a coherent and comprehensive narrative spanning different cultures, regions, and time periods while taking diverse individual perspectives into account. This is also reflected in its [interdisciplinary approach](#) by integrating insights from fields belonging to the [humanities](#) and the [social](#), biological, and [physical sciences](#), such as other [historical disciplines](#), [archaeology](#), [anthropology](#), [linguistics](#), [genetics](#), [paleontology](#), and [geology](#). The interdisciplinary approach is of particular importance to the study of human history before the invention of writing.^[571]

Periodization

To provide an accessible overview, historians divide human history into different periods organized around key themes, events, or developments that have shaped human societies over time. The number of periods and their time frames depend on the chosen topics, and the transitions between periods are often more fluid than static periodization schemes suggest.^[572]

A traditionally influential periodization in European scholarship distinguishes between the ancient, medieval, and modern periods^[573] organized around historical events responsible for major shifts in political, economic, and cultural structures to mark the transitions between the

periods: first the fall of the Western Roman Empire and later the emergence of the Renaissance.^[574] Another periodization divides human history into three periods based on the way humans engage with nature to produce goods. The first transition happened with the emergence of agriculture and husbandry to replace hunting and gathering as the main means of food production. The Industrial Revolution constitutes the second transition.^[575] A further approach uses the relations between societies to divide the history of the world into the periods of Middle Eastern dominance before 500 BCE, Eurasian cultural balance until 1500 CE, and Western dominance afterwards.^[576] The invention of writing is often used to demark prehistory from the ancient period while another approach divides early history based on the type of tools used in the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages.^[577] Historians focusing on religion and culture identify the Axial Age as a key turning point that laid the spiritual and philosophical foundations of many of the world's major civilizations. Some historians draw on elements from different approaches to arrive at a more nuanced periodization.^[578]

References

Explanatory notes

- a. This date comes from the 2015 discovery of stone tools at the [Lomekwi](#) site in Kenya.^[3] Some paleontologists propose an earlier date of 3.39 million years ago based on bones found with butchery marks on them in [Dikika](#), Ethiopia,^[4] while others dispute both the Dikika and Lomekwi findings.^[5]
- b. the African variant is sometimes called [H. ergaster](#)
- c. Or perhaps earlier; the 2018 discovery of stone tools from 2.1 million years ago in [Shangchen](#), China predates the earliest known *H. erectus* fossils.^[12]
- d. Some authors suggest a later date at around 200,000 years ago.^[19]
- e. The term [Homo rhodesiensis](#) is also sometimes used.
- f. These dates come from a 2018 study of an upper jawbone from [Misliya Cave](#), Israel.^[29] Researchers studying a fossil skull from [Apidima Cave](#), Greece in 2019 proposed an earlier date of 210,000 years ago.^[30] The Apidima Cave study has been challenged by other scholars.^[31]
- g. Other scholars argue in favor of a northern dispersal of humans through Central Asia into China, or a multiple dispersal model with several different routes of migration.^[33]
- h. This occurred during the [African humid period](#), when the Sahara was much wetter than it is today.^[47]

- i. This is the traditional date for the founding of the [Xia dynasty](#) and has not been confirmed by archaeology.^[69] Chinese civilization had its origins in the earlier [Yangshao](#) and [Longshan cultures](#) (4000–2000 BCE),^[70] but the [Shang](#) is the first dynasty that can be archeologically verified (1750 BCE).^[71]
- j. Various forms of [proto-writing](#) existed earlier but they did not constitute fully developed writing system.^[85]
- k. Cuneiform texts were written by using a blunt [reed](#) as a [stylus](#) to draw [symbols](#) upon [clay tablets](#).^[87]
- l. The [Vedas](#) contain the earliest references to India's [caste system](#), which divided society into four hereditary classes: priests, warriors, farmers and traders, and laborers.^[104]
- m. The exact dates are disputed and some periodizations use 1450 as the end point.^[199]
- n. For example, the folktales [One Thousand and One Nights](#) were written in this period.^[218]
- o. Goguryeo was called [Taebong](#) at that time and eventually named [Goryeo](#).
- p. They traveled the open ocean in double-hulled canoes up to 37 metres (121 ft) long, each canoe carrying as many as 50 people and their livestock.^[352]
- q. The time span varies depending on the type of history studied: [literary studies](#) can define it as short as about 1500–1700 while some general historians extend its span from 1300–1800.^[366]
- r. Some scholars date the period later, to the 15th and 16th centuries.^[391]
- s. The Chinese invented movable type centuries earlier, but it was better suited to the alphabetical writing systems of European languages.^[399]
- t. They are known as [haijin](#) in China and [sakoku](#) in Japan.
- u. Magellan died in 1521. The voyage was completed by Spanish navigator [Juan Sebastián Elcano](#) in 1522.^[443]
- v. In Brazil, this influence resulted in the development of [Capoeira](#).^[451]
- w. Some historians use a different periodization, saying that it began as early as 1750^[460] or as late as 1800.^[461]
- x. Some historians also classify [Francoist Spain](#) as a fascist regime.^[502]
- y. One of the main factors responsible for this was the reduction of [infant mortality](#).^[546]
- z. The Aztec civilization is an exception, having established compulsory formal education for children as early as the 14th century.^[549]

- aa. According to one estimate, about 90% of the global population aged 15–64 was uneducated in 1870. This number had dropped to 10% by 2010.^[551]
- ab. Some historians use the terms *world history* and *global history* to refer to all these attempts while others understand world history and global history in a more narrow sense as one among several competing approaches to study the development of the world on a global scale.^[568]

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45. Barker & Goucher 2015, pp. 325, 336, "More recent improvements in archaeobotanical recovery have indicated that rice domestication was underway durin...the Hemudu cultural phase in the lower Yangtze valley...This points to a start of cultivation in this region of c. 10,000–9,000 years ago; in the middle Yangtze valley it could have begun someone earlier but may represent a parallel process to the lower Yangtze...it has been suggested on the basis of phytolith and starch residue evidence that broomcorn and foxtail millet were already in use in northern China prior to 7000 BCE. Nonetheless, the most abundant macrofossil evidence of broomcorn and foxtail millet is found in association with the early Neolithic sites post-7000 BCE."
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51. [Barker & Goucher 2015](#), p. 85
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52. [Adovasio, Soffer & Page 2007](#), pp. 243, 257
[Graeber & Wengrow 2021](#), "Seen this way, the 'origins of farming' start to look less like an economic transition and more like a media revolution, which was also a social revolution, encompassing everything from horticulture to architecture, mathematics to thermodynamics, and from religion to the remodelling of gender roles. And while we can't know exactly who was doing what in this brave new world, it's abundantly clear that women's work and knowledge were central to its creation; that the whole process was a fairly leisurely, even playful one, not forced by any environmental catastrophe or demographic tipping point and unmarked by major violent conflict. What's more, it was all carried out in ways that made radical inequality an extremely unlikely outcome"
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59. [Barker & Goucher 2015](#), p. 193
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60. [Barker & Goucher 2015](#), pp. 161–162, 172–173
61. [Bulliet et al. 2015a](#), p. 99
62. [Radivojevic et al. 2013](#), pp. 1030–1045 (<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1420706/>)

63. Headrick 2009, pp. 30–31
64. McClellan & Dorn 2006, p. 41 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=aJgp94zNwNQ>
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66. Bard 2000, p. 63
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67. Benjamin 2015, p. 563
68. Graeber & Wengrow 2021, p. 314
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70. Tignor et al. 2014, p. 71
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73. Headrick 2009, p. 32
74. Roberts & Westad 2013, p. 59
75. Bulliet et al. 2015a, p. 35
76. Roberts & Westad 2013, p. 91
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82. Regulski 2016
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